



Quarterly E-Newsletter

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Get to Know the Commission: Stacey Dougan, Esq.



Stacey Dougan is the Assistant General Counsel at Greenberg Traurig, LLP, in their Atlanta, Georgia office. This is Stacey's third and final year as a member of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence. Her first interaction with the Commission was in 1999, when she convened a conference for STOP Grant attorneys throughout the State of Florida to address issues of domestic violence in the areas of policy, technical assistance in litigation and appellate advocacy. Stacey met a member of The Commission at this conference and established a relationship that continued to flourish throughout the subsequent years. She also worked closely with the Commission in 2000 when she served as a consultant for the ABA Young Lawyer's Division when it sponsored a Mock Trial at the Annual Meeting. Stacey shared that it has been a very rewarding relationship.

Stacey's involvement in addressing domestic violence began in 1997, when she represented in appellate and clemency proceedings a formerly battered woman who had killed her abuser. Although she succeeded in getting her released from prison based on evidence of domestic violence that was not properly presented at her trial, Stacey was astonished by how hard she had to work despite having all of the advantages and resources of a large firm. She couldn't imagine the difficulties encountered every day by lawyers on the "front lines." That experience motivated her to think about other, innovative and collaborative ways that large law firms could provide support to victims of domestic violence beyond the traditional pro bono model. Thus was born the Greenberg Traurig/Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Alliance for Battered Women in March 1999. Stacey served as the founder and director of this strategic Alliance, which provided litigation support, appellate advocacy, policy development

assistance, legal consultation and training on domestic violence legal issues for legal aid and legal services attorneys representing battered women throughout the State of Florida. Her involvement in domestic violence has also been very focused on domestic violence in the workplace. In 1999, she led the effort within Greenberg Traurig to develop and implement called *Domestic Violence and Its Effects in the Workplace* policy and training program. That effort had the full support of Cesar Alvarez, the firm's CEO, who has become an influential advocate in this arena by sharing freely with other corporate leaders the urgency of addressing domestic violence in and through the workplace. Since that time, Stacey has also worked closely with the firm's Labor and Employment Practice Group to assist corporate clients in understanding and responding to domestic violence and its effects in the workplace. Through the years she has worked with clients and advocacy organizations throughout the country to address these issues. She frequently speaks and writes on the topic as well.

Stacey has always been enormously impressed by the expertise and contribution to the domestic violence movement made by ABA Commission on Domestic Violence members. Many “mothers of the movement” have served or been involved with the Commission, so she always viewed the Commission as an effective vehicle by which to influence law and policy in this area.

Stacey believes that over the years, the Commission has become more integral to the ABA as a whole and is called upon with more frequency to address important ABA policies in many different areas (e.g., homelessness, child advocacy, mental illness, etc). The Commission has also been successful in articulating the need for all lawyers to understand domestic violence because the prevalence of this problem alone leads inexorably to the reality that, regardless of our individual practice areas, domestic violence is an issue that we are all likely to confront in our work.

The passion, commitment and expertise that the members and staff bring to this work is inspiring to Stacey. She is also very proud that the issue of domestic violence in the workplace was featured as a front page article in last September's ABA Journal. The article served to raise the profile of this issue among lawyers, which is critical to this work. Stacey believes that lawyers can have a tremendous influence on how their corporate clients perceive and respond to this issue. That influence carries the potential to strengthen the economic safety net for battered women and their children. The more employers understand this issue, the less likely it is that battered women will lose their jobs as a result of domestic violence.

Stacey's involvement with the Commission has enhanced dramatically her knowledge of domestic violence and the law and has expanded her network of contacts with whom to collaborate in a myriad of ways. She has also made some wonderful friends through the Commission.

Stacey hopes that E-Newsletter readers understand how critical it is to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to legal advocacy. As lawyers, we often focus exclusively on legal proceedings, which are usually a very small slice of a client's experiences. Regardless of

whether a lawyer "wins" a particular matter for a client, we must remember that she still faces daunting prospects of meeting the needs of her family in the areas of safety, housing, child care, education...just to name a few. Lawyers need to be sensitive to those issues and make sure we provide our clients with information and resources to assist them in meeting those needs. That is why maintaining links with the advocacy and social services community is critical to this work.

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